



Selling Radio to College Authorities; A National Plan¹

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WHY SHOULD IT BE NECESSARY to sell radio to college authorities? To one alert to the possibilities of universal communication this is a foolish question. Radio, with its tremendous values, should sell itself. Professors covet audiences and radio offers millions of listeners distributed nation-wide. Why need to convince faculties of the values of broadcasting?

While we are asking questions, let us propound some harder ones and the answers may clear the minor puzzles. Why did the American people permit an instrument so vital to popular government as instantaneous and universal communication to be seized and devoted exclusively to selling goods, making all other uses subordinate and incidental?

In spite of America's boasted aggressiveness in business fields, as a nation she has been exceedingly slow in realizing and envisioning values in the realm of social welfare. During the early years of radio development everyone's attention was centered on material progress. The noise of the dollars jingling by drowned the few feeble voices proclaiming in the wilderness the public welfare values of an intimate talk to every one of the nation's firesides. America was preoccupied, ignorant, and neglectful of intangible social services. It has required the chastening of calamity to force America to study social science.

A new instrument, little understood, unappreciated, still experimental, offered free entertainment. The novelty, the thrill of getting far-away stations, satisfied the fans who played with the new toy. Advertisers were giving us free programs—why pay for them? It is not surprising that we failed to realize the importance of the new gadget, especially since its public utilization required immediate public expense. Furthermore, altho support by advertising increased the cost many fold, the tax was concealed and each listener fatuously thought the other fellow paid it.

That broadcasting was worthwhile, school administrators, always pressed for funds, had to convince themselves as well as trustees, legislatures, and faculties. Furthermore, all of them had to be satisfied that the services of broadcasting came within the purview of the universities. Only recently are demonstrations at hand showing the true field of service for broadcasting. Such service includes, among other things, an extension and amplification of previously established university services.

During the period of experimentation, academic faculties which ventured into the new field failed to appreciate the limitations of the new medium and the new technic required to hold an unseen audience. Often too much was expected of the new instrument. Failures in extending conventional classroom lectures to radio listeners brought discouragement. This was particularly true in the face of rising costs made necessary in order to keep pace with invention, discovery, and development. Obsolescence of equipment, added to unsuitable programs and the difficult task of learning a new technic, caused abandonment of many promising stations. Just try to teach a university faculty any new tricks if you wish to test the strength of academic inertia, of tradition, habit, and convention.

Today the few remaining university stations have demonstrated the public service possibilities of radio in programs to the public and private schools, in public forums, in promoting public business, in general health instruction, in enlarging, amplifying, and extending adult education, and in making available the results of research. If, at the outset, we had been able to envision the situation today, at least a share in the air would have been reserved for exclusive public use.

The same conditions which lulled the citizens of the nation into allowing this wonder of the century to be devoted to selling goods also made it necessary to sell broadcasting to the colleges. Thru clear, convincing demonstrations of the value of broadcasting to American culture and government there is yet a chance to sell this instrument to both the universities and the public.

What is needed today is a plan which gives promise of conserving for public purposes a share in the air. The present American system of broadcasting is an almost incredible absurdity. Our country stakes its existence upon universal suffrage, upon the general intelligence of its citizens, upon the spread of reliable information, upon the attitudes and judgments of all the people; and then consigns exclusively to private interests this means of general communication. As a result, its use for general public welfare becomes inevitably subordinate and incidental.

The absurdity becomes more apparent when we deal with a limited natural resource belonging to all of us and save almost none of it for our own general use.

The absurdity passes comprehension when we not only give up our public birthright but tax ourselves for the support of commissions to protect private monopoly in the use and control of that which belongs to the nation.

The absurdity becomes tragic when the vital values of radio communication to a democracy are considered. Culture, in the broadest sense, entertainment of the most wholesome kind, information vital to public welfare, team work to make effective government by the people—all these are within the gift of broadcasting, but each must now await the pleasure of the advertiser. Great public agencies interested solely in American welfare must plead before a federal commission, beseeching it to grant a small part of the air for public use not dependent upon the gratuity of advertising. The spectacle would be humorous, were it not so tragic.

The National Committee on Education by Radio, a body representing nine great national educational agencies, has studied the entire situation for more than four years. It now presents a definite, concrete plan to save a share of facilities for public use and to give the listeners who pay the bills a larger and freer choice of programs. The Committee proposes a plan which, it is hoped, will receive general discussion, and will serve as a rallying point for those who desire to use this great radio agency as an instrument to advance and unify a mighty nation.

Of all principles safeguarding American institutions, the one affording the greatest protection is freedom of speech. Without it, freedom of thought is nullified. Freedom of speech includes freedom of the press as well as freedom in all means

¹ An address before the Sixth Annual Institute for Education by Radio, Columbus, Ohio, May 7, 1935.

EDUCATION BY RADIO

is published by
THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION BY RADIO
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1201 Sixteenth Street, Northwest, Washington, D. C.

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of communication. America has zealously defended freedom of the press, even to the point of permitting excesses and abuses rather than hazarding the dangers of the slightest censorship. America has recognized the same principle in maintaining the right of communication free and untrammelled for all citizens using the United States mails. Postal facilities have been extended to every citizen, to the remotest hamlet, to the rural population—even at the expense of annual deficits—in order to protect the right of universal communication. Telephone and telegraph have been made public utilities and common carriers of communication. Their service is open to all citizens who are able and ready to pay for it. The right of uncensored communication is the essential expression of free speech. Without free speech and free discussion a government of the people cannot endure. It is the bed-rock of American institutions.

Radio broadcasting is the most potent of all forms of communication. It is instantaneous and universal. It speaks to literate and illiterate alike. It calls a nation on instant notice into a great public town meeting. If freedom of the press and of the post office, of telephone and telegraph, are essential to freedom of speech, how many times more vital is radio. Public use of this communication marvel of the century must be preserved to insure America's freedom of speech. It must not be permitted to come under the control of any limited body of men or special interests. It must remain under public control for public welfare. It is not a question of the character of the private control, however honorable and decent. America cannot safely entrust the means of universal communication exclusively to any private control, since such control must be governed by the limitations of available time and channels and by the necessity for producing profitable income.

The National Committee on Education by Radio proposes a plan for preserving for public use an adequate portion of the limited broadcasting facilities as a protection to free speech. The Committee is not attacking commercial broadcasters. They have done a remarkably fine piece of work in many ways. Our commercial stations often have been and still are offering much of their facilities for educational and nonprofit broadcasting. These favors are appreciated, and, for that reason, the plan proposed by the National Committee on Education by Radio has been carefully framed to cause the least disturbance, the least possible hardship to present broadcasters. In fact, the establishment of a parallel public broadcasting

system would probably relieve commercial broadcasters from many embarrassing demands and requests for broadcasts of nonadvertising character. The Committee is not protesting against advertising as such. To promote the sale of worthy articles is commendable. On the other hand, America's freedom of speech for all men and all parties must not be consigned to the inevitable censorship of a broadcasting system dependent upon advertising revenues for its existence. The plan proposed by the National Committee on Education by Radio is for the protection of free discussion, free dissemination of ideas, and universal enjoyment of the best America produces in culture, entertainment, and information.

The plan asks only for a portion of radio channels, leaving the major part of the limited available band for the use of private commercial interests. It does not ask for a definite percentage of the available radio frequencies. The amount required must be determined by technical experts and will change as modern developments take place in this comparatively new art. However, is it unreasonable for the public to reserve even as much as one-fourth of the facilities of the air for public use if merchandising still retains three-fourths? The National Committee is not unappreciative of the many fine things put on the air by the private broadcasters. Advertising of superior articles is commendable, but stations wholly dependent upon the revenues from merchandising can give only incidental service to public welfare, and, inevitably, when public welfare conflicts with advertising revenues, the cash receipts must win. Such censorship is dangerous to public welfare.

The new plan proposes to place the operation and control of a public system under national, regional, and state boards composed of leaders in American welfare. The members of the boards are to be carefully selected and safeguarded against the vicious influence of political or private propagandists. Under these boards would be the technical operators of stations and the managers of programs.

The public system, supplementing but not supplanting the present private system, would give greater freedom of choice to the listener who, under all systems, finally pays the bills. By a turn of the dial the listener could enjoy either a constructive public program or the alluring charms of rejuvenating crystals, the merits of toothpastes and mouthwashes, or the latest scheme for selling something.

The public system would permit broadcasts to the public schools by master teachers, bringing stimulation to teachers and pupils alike, and connecting even the most isolated classroom with the best in music, literature, information, and entertainment. State stations have already demonstrated that broadcasting improves school instruction. Even if general broadcasts to public schools should increase the effectiveness of school expenditures a mere five percent, it would return additional values worth one hundred fifty millions annually on the three billion dollar education bill. Private as well as public schools are equally concerned in broadcasting values. In neither public nor private schools is advertising, even the unobjectionable, likely to be permitted.

By assuring affiliation with the national system for all nonprofit stations, any local poverty of program material will be enriched by national hookups. All the genius of America would be available for all.

The public system would maintain experimentation and research in broadcasting technics to make this great agency, which so intimately enters American homes, of the most use for public welfare.

The statement which follows is a formal, terse outline of the plan:

The National Committee on Education by Radio, concluding four years of study and investigation, recommends to the President, the Congress, and to the people of the United States a plan for an American system of radio broadcasting to serve the welfare of the American people.¹

The people of the United States shall establish a broadcasting system to supplement but not to supplant the present private system, and to make available to American listeners programs free from advertising and presenting entertainment and information to promote public welfare. Such supplemental public system should meet as far as practicable the following specifications:

[1] The management of such public broadcasting system, including the determination of program policies, shall be vested in a series of boards—national, regional, and state—with suitable powers to insure service to both national and local needs. These boards should be non-partisan, the members carefully selected from leaders active in fields of public welfare, such as agriculture, labor, music, drama, schools, religion, science, medicine, law, the arts, and other civic interests. It is suggested that appointments to the national board and to the regional boards be made by the President of the United States, confirmed by the United States Senate, and to the state boards by the respective governors, in all cases the appointments to be from lists of eligible persons nominated by the supreme courts of the several states.

[2] The system shall be available for public business, for public forums, for adult education, for broadcasts to schools, for public service by nonprofit welfare agencies, and for other general welfare broadcasts.

[3] Nonprofit welfare stations shall be assured the right of affiliation with the federal system.

[4] The system shall ultimately be extended to provide satisfactory coverage of the continental United States, including remote rural sections as well as more densely populated urban areas.

[5] The provision of funds and the allocation of suitable broadcasting channels necessary for the effective operation of the system shall be made by the federal government.

[6] Recordings of programs of general significance shall be made and shall be available for broadcasting from nonprofit stations.

[7] A continuous program of research shall be maintained by the public boards to study the desires of the people, the preparation of programs, the technic of broadcasting, and the results of the broadcasts.

The National Committee on Education by Radio believes that this plan presents a happy combination of private and public broadcasting systems—that it is a plan which will not work undue hardship on the present broadcasters, will improve the service to the listeners, and will be of untold benefit to a nation whose happiness and very existence is dependent upon the general standards of its people. The national system, dedicated solely to public welfare, will make audible and effective the voice of a nation.

Wanted—An Honest Radio Writer

THERE ARE FEW MEN IN PUBLIC LIFE who have not, at one time or another, been misquoted. Even when the press is provided with advance copies of an address, there is a tendency upon the part of some newspapermen to report the sensational rather than the important statements. Impartial observers report that the American public experiences greater difficulty in securing reliable information concerning radio than in the case of almost any other subject.

The choice radio facilities of this country are assigned to commercial interests and are exploited for profit. The chain companies and the larger stations all maintain highpowered public relations staffs. From these grist mills are turned out daily an endless mass of words and pictures, much of which the companies hope will find its way into the newspapers and magazines of the country. A great deal of this material is

highly flavored propaganda. Is it any wonder that radio editors of newspapers are sometimes biased in their viewpoint?

Newspapers should have a source of unbiased information which might be used as a balance-wheel to offset the releases of "honeyed" propaganda. This material should originate with well-educated, independent, unbiased, and skillful writers who have no interest, other than professional, in the broadcasting companies, artists, or related industries. More of these individuals [and there are a few of them in existence] are very much needed by the American public.

The radio is gradually being accepted as an American institution. The better class of radio listeners are learning to select their programs with greater care. They follow radio notes in the newspapers and periodicals. Individuals connected with the broadcasting stations attempt to keep informed.

Can the American listener secure the facts about radio broadcasting? Can the commercial broadcasters, themselves, obtain accurate information on the subject? Can the leaders in education, government, and civic affairs depend upon the newspapers and popular magazines for unbiased accounts?

Those who have been studying this matter for some time feel that one of the greatest needs of the present is for fearless, unbiased reporting of facts concerning the various aspects of radio broadcasting. Has the picture been painted too darkly? That is not the intention. There have been a few rays of light.

On the other hand, anyone who reads at all and knows the facts could point out numerous illustrations of inaccurate reporting. Let me give you an illustration from which you may draw your own conclusions.

One of the monthly radio magazines published recently an article entitled "Which System of Broadcasting?" presenting the results secured from a ballot distributed among its Canadian readers.² A ballot, printed in an issue of the magazine, attempted to determine the attitude of Canadians toward government versus private control of radio. Such a study has little value as a research project. It begins with a serious handicap because it limits the voters to those who receive copies of the magazine, and, further, to the peculiar type of person who would participate in such a poll. However, the magazine attempted to be fair. The author of the article refers to the fact that "the issue is not a clear-cut one." He then says:

Most of our readers in the Dominion evidently would prefer to pay \$2 a year tax and have the programs free from sales ballyhoo, but at the same time, they want the variety embodied in the sponsors' programs and the high type of artist.

Reporting this study, a trade magazine of the commercial radio broadcasting industry, in an article headed "Control of Broadcasting by Canada Thru Tax Is Opposed by Listeners," begins with this remarkable statement:

A substantial majority of Canadian listeners favor the United States' broadcasting system as against their own system of governmental control with a receiver tax, according to a poll of the Canadian audience taken by *Radex*, published by the Radex Press, Inc., Cleveland.³

The National Committee on Education by Radio regrets that it cannot bring the facts to every home in the country. In *Education by Radio*, which reaches only the leaders in education, government, and civic affairs, it attempts to present an unbiased viewpoint of education by radio as well as of other aspects of radio broadcasting which bear upon the Committee's field of activity. At no time has such an unbiased service been so necessary as at present.

¹ Adopted by the National Committee on Education by Radio, March 25, 1935. The Committee is composed of representatives of the following groups: National Association of State Universities, National Association of Educational Broadcasters, National Catholic Educational Association, National University Extension Association, National Education Association, The Jesuit Educational Association, National Council of State Superintendents, Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, and the American Council on Education.

² *Radio Index* 11:38-40, January 1, 1935.

³ *Broadcasting* 8:52, March 15, 1935.

Gleanings from Varied Sources

To the agricultural institute at Allahabad, the head of which is Dr. Sam Higginbottom, belongs the credit of establishing the first rural broadcasting service in India. The government of India has just given to the institute a license to broadcast its programs, but the local government will most probably appoint a censor. Mr. Mason Vaughn, the engineer of the institute in charge of the broadcasting scheme, hopes to make the test transmissions by the end of this month or earlier. The formal opening of the broadcasting station of the institute is expected to take place on February 27, when a "farmers' fair" will also be inaugurated, and the programs to be broadcast for the first four days will be the evening programs of the fair. It is proposed to put up, for the present, six or seven receivingsets in different villages in the Allahabad district. Other centers will be selected as opportunity offers.—Correspondence from India, *Christian Century* 52:374, March 20, 1935.

By careful planning and selection it was found possible to cover the fundamental grammar topics of a complete elementary course in German, including a basic vocabulary of approximately 1400 words, in forty-eight broadcasts of fifteen minutes each. . . . From comments and inquiries which we have received and from our own study of the best arrangement for meeting the needs and desires of the greatest number of interested people who want to take advantage of this educational opportunity . . . the time for broadcasting has been changed to a more favorable hour. This year, therefore, the schedule has been changed so that the lessons will be broadcast three times a week, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 6PM. This will enable us to complete the course in sixteen weeks.—E. F. ENGEL, professor of German, University of Kansas.

The listening public should have up-to-the-minute news broadcasts from reliable sources, uncolored by an advertiser's sponsorship. They should be paid for out of the vast annual value of channel occupancy for advertising use and should not have to be provided at the expense of newspaper publishers. Organizing of additional news-gathering services to compete with the established ones ought not to be necessary. For reasons of economy, it should be preferable to arrange on an amicable business basis for suitable bulletins to be supplied by reliable established agencies.—CHICAGO CIVIC BROADCAST BUREAU, *Brief*, submitted to Federal Communications Commission, November 24, 1934, p9.

It seems to me that purveyors of entertainment have no greater responsibility than providing safe and stimulative play material for the children of the race. No doubt there is a lot of apron-string nonsense current about the effects of robust games, but it is also not to be doubted that certain vicious patterns drawn on the printed page, screen, or over the air can disastrously influence children.—MARLEN PEW, "Shop Talk at Thirty," *Editor and Publisher*, March 16, 1935, p44.

Patterns of Loveliness is the title of a series of character-building radio dramas given each Monday evening from 8:15 to 8:30 thru the facilities of the Yankee Network. These dramas are prepared under the direction of Joseph B. Egan, authority on character training, and master, Harvard School, Charlestown, Massachusetts. Each unit consists of a dramatization, prepared by professional writers, of some great moment in biography, history, or legendary lore.

At our command we have the best the world has produced in science, literature, music, drama, and other wholesome entertainment. We must not fail to take advantage of this great opportunity. We must not turn radio broadcasting into a grotesque side-show by producing obnoxious programs. . . . The Federal Communications Commission looks to station owners, and not to the sponsors of advertising, to present and broadcast programs in the public interest and therefore can only hold station owners responsible. . . . I would not care to have the impression go forth that we expect every advertiser or every broadcasting station to go on the air with high-priced stars or symphonies. . . . We do expect, however, that regardless of the cost, or the variety, or the type of entertainment produced, it will be clean and wholesome.—ANNING S. PRALL, chairman, Federal Communications Commission, in a radio address, April 10, 1935.

Misleading claims and deceptive advertising by manufacturers, notably the "ethical" drug and pharmaceutical houses, have led the public to purchase dangerously ineffective antiseptics and germicides and have created many erroneous impressions regarding the potency and limitations of antiseptics and germicides in general. No advertising, not even that in reputable medical journals, can be relied on in this respect. As Consumers' Research subscribers know, the weak and ineffective food and drug laws have no control whatever over advertising of antiseptics; consequently, the manufacturers can make all sorts of wild and misleading claims thru advertisements in newspapers and magazines, billboards, car cards, and over the radio, that cesspool of shady advertising.—*Consumers' Research Bulletin* 1:7, April 1935.

The University of Denver has recently installed a "lie detector" in the speech department to aid students of speech. The object is to check up on the nervousness of an individual when speaking, even though he may appear outwardly very calm. The galvanometer, then, will indicate any emotional changes due to stuttering, untruths, lack of confidence, or other causes. This same type of study has been used in the physics department of the university, and the findings show that the best speakers had a minimum of emotional disturbance.

Education by Radio received on time. I hold up both hands to what you say in April 18 issue. I have a twelve-year-old boy. What haven't I bought! I am told to "stick 'em up" at almost every corner. Some programs I have absolutely forbidden. It is hours sometimes before he goes to sleep. I find the light on in the night—excuse—bad dreams. So it goes. The appeal to children over parents' heads is a real menace.—A NEW ENGLAND SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT.

The sustaining programs emerged with honors. They were usually more thoughtfully planned and better chosen than programs with a commercial sponsorship.—A. WALTER KRAMER, editor, *Musical America*, *New York Times*, April 14, 1935.

Speaking of books, authors, and newspaper publicity, it is said that much interest is being aroused in the Bible as a storehouse of radio invective.—*New York Times*, March 15, 1935.

An investigator reports that in Missouri and Arkansas hillbilly crime is decreasing. Probably not decreasing—just transferred to the radio.—*Providence News-Tribune*.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Scanned from the National Association of Educational Broadcasters Records
at the Wisconsin Historical Society as part of
"Unlocking the Airwaves: Revitalizing an Early Public and Educational Radio Collection."



A collaboration among the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities,
University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Communication Arts,
and Wisconsin Historical Society.

Supported by a Humanities Collections and Reference Resources grant from
the National Endowment for the Humanities



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